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ABSTRACT

This booklet describes existing and planned government initiatives to address the long-standing issue of low achievement in basic literacy and numeracy skills in England. The booklet begins with a brief explanation of the economic and social importance of basic functional literacy and numeracy skills. Part 1 is a discussion of English government policy initiatives to improve literacy and numeracy throughout England. Among the specific topics discussed are the following: children from preschool age to age 16 (identifying and meeting all pupils' needs, improving the quality of teaching, challenging current standards and promoting school improvement); the transition from school to work; help for adults; and information technology. Examined in part 2 are possible directions for future government initiatives targeted toward children and parents, young people, and adults. Part 2 also addresses issues that must be considered when developing policies for the longer term: improving the effectiveness of existing national/local provision for basic skills, identifying best practices and improvements needed in practices and the overall structure of basic skills provision, and determining how to disseminate research and evaluation results more effectively. Selected definitions are appended. Also included is a set of 24 fact sheets on basic skills- and literacy-related topics. (MN)

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# Basic Skills for life

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# Basic Skills for Life

## Foreword

### by the Secretary of State for Education and Employment

The basic skills of functional literacy and numeracy underpin the economic and social health of the nation. It is vital that everyone acquires the basic skills that they will need to be active and fulfilled, both in the workforce and in society more generally. That is why the Government has placed basic skills at the heart of its education, training and lifetime learning policies.

Good basic skills are essential at every stage of people's lives. The Government's Skills Audit published last year showed that as a nation we have not been doing as well as we should in this key area. The Department has therefore carefully considered existing provision to ensure that basic skills needs are being met.

We are already doing a great deal. The first part of this document sets out the full range of existing measures to improve basic skills. They range from Nursery Vouchers for every 4 year old, to measures to improve the focus and quality of basic skills in schools through to initiatives to help adults, whether they are in or out of work.

Schools, colleges, local authorities, TECs and others, supported by Government action, have made great strides in recent years to raise standards and increase participation in education and training. Nevertheless, both in schools and among the adult population concerns about basic skill achievement persist.

The Government is determined that *everyone* should have the opportunity to develop good basic skills. We need to ensure that individuals of all ages are given the support and information necessary to meet their basic skill needs. I have asked the Basic Skills Agency to mount a series of conferences to discuss the issues and bring together good practice.

The Government is putting in place a series of new measures which are set out in the second part of this document. They include the development of a family-based approach to numeracy, work to improve the performance of secondary school boys in literacy, the Relaunch pilots bidding exercise, and improvements in the help available to unemployed adults with basic skills difficulties. These measures will reinforce and strengthen the work that is already going on nationally and locally.

Gillian Shephard

**Gillian Shephard**

[redacted]

Note: Although some of the statistical evidence quoted refers to the UK or to England and Wales in combination, this document relates to England only. Detailed policies on basic skills within Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are the responsibility of the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland Offices respectively.

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# Basic Skills for Life

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# Introduction

1.1. This document is primarily concerned with the basic skills of functional literacy (reading and writing) and numeracy (the use of number)[1]. Everyone needs these skills. They provide an essential foundation for further learning. They open the door to a wider range of job opportunities and leisure activities. They help people to live fuller, more rewarding lives. Our businesses need people with good basic skills to improve their performance and competitiveness.

1.2. Low achievement in basic skills has major economic and social significance.

1.3. Poor basic skills:

- *undermine the effectiveness of other education and training provision.* Under-performance at 11 impedes progress and hinders the effectiveness of secondary education. Poor outputs from secondary education will, in turn, impact on the effectiveness of post-16 education and training;
- *reduce an individual's ability to compete effectively in the labour market.* Few jobs in today's world do not require good basic skills, and the number is decreasing all the time as the labour market becomes more complex and more demanding. According to employers, only one in ten jobs below technician level have no requirement for literacy skills at any level, and only one in four have no requirement for numeracy skills. In recent surveys, 45% of employers said literacy and/or numeracy had increased in importance. Many employers will therefore simply choose not to recruit people with basic skill problems. As a result, those people with poor basic skills are now five times more likely to have extended periods of unemployment;
- *add to business costs by increasing workplace training costs, reducing organisational flexibility and harming productivity and output.* Poor basic skills impede a company's efficiency when it is seeking to re-skill or re-structure its workforce and may damage its reputation with customers or have an adverse effect on health and safety;

[1] For fuller definitions of 'functional literacy and numeracy', see Annex 1.

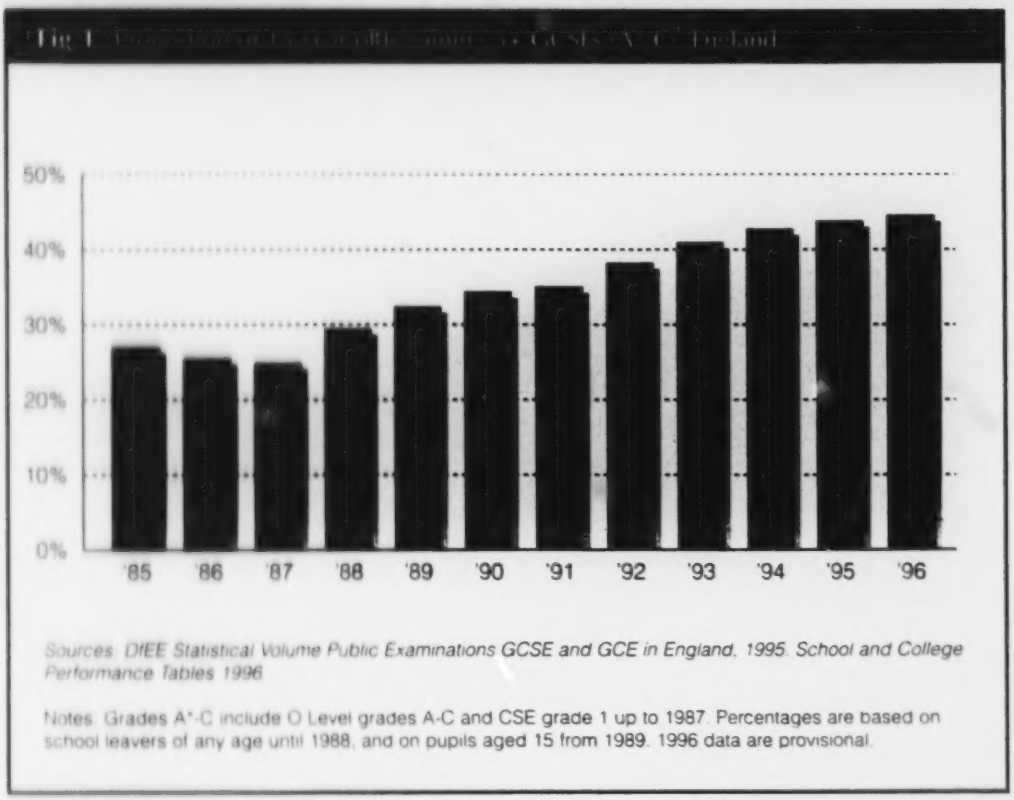
- *have significant personal and social costs.* Literacy difficulties can diminish confidence and self-esteem. The social stigma attached to the inability to read or write may lead to isolation and disengagement from the most basic social and community activities. The children of those lacking basic skills are themselves much more likely to under-achieve and so repeat the cycle of disadvantage.

**Table 1** Basic Skills by Economic Activity

| Job | Literacy low (%) | Literacy high (%) | Numeracy low (%) | Numeracy high (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Professional/managerial | 2 | 42 | 4 | 50 |
| Junior manager/administrator | 4 | 34 | 6 | 38 |
| Office worker/salesperson | 4 | 23 | 10 | 28 |
| Skilled manual | 8 | 14 | 18 | 21 |
| Semi-skilled manual | 15 | 10 | 34 | 9 |
| Unskilled | 18 | 11 | 35 | 10 |

**Table 2** Median Male Earnings by Highest Qualification in Great Britain (as a % of median earnings for all males).

| Qualification | 1979 | 1983 | 1987 | 1991 | 1993 | 1994 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| First degree & above | 148 | 155 | 153 | 164 | 156 | 158 |
| HE below degree level | 119 | 125 | 116 | 123 | 119 | 118 |
| GCE 'A' level & equivalent | 103 | 104 | 105 | 106 | 102 | 103 |
| 'O' Level/GCSE & equivalent | 105 | 100 | 99 | 94 | 95 | 94 |
| CSE below Grade 1 & equivalent | 98 | 92 | 91 | 79 | 85 | 82 |
| No qualification | 91 | 89 | 86 | 82 | 81 | 82 |




*Sources: DfEE Statistical Volume Public Examinations GCSE and GCE in England, 1995. School and College Performance Tables 1996*

Notes: Grades A*-C include O Level grades A-C and CSE grade 1 up to 1987. Percentages are based on school leavers of any age until 1988, and on pupils aged 15 from 1989. 1996 data are provisional.

1.4. Over the last ten years, education standards and attainment in this country have improved dramatically:

- In 1996 44.5% of GCSE pupils achieved five or more grades A*- C, up from 27% in 1985;
- In 1996 29% of young people achieved 2 or more A levels, up from 15% in 1985;
- In 1995 69% achieved level 2 qualifications by age 19, up from 46% in 1985;
- In 1995 45% achieved level 3 qualifications by age 21, up from 27% in 1985.

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1.5. The 1996 Skills Audit[2], which compared this country's competitive position on learning and skills with Germany, France, the United States and Singapore, showed our strength in the areas of higher level skills and lifetime learning. Nearly one in three of all young people entered Higher Education (HE) in 1995/96, double the rate of participation in 1988/89. The number of first degrees awarded has risen by over 85% since 1979.

1.6. The Skills Audit also highlighted the need for further action to address literacy and numeracy skills. The issue of low achievement in basic skills is persistent and long-standing. The Government is determined to ensure that levels of achievement are raised.

[2] *The Skills Audit: A Report from an Interdepartmental Group*, DfEE and Cabinet Office, 1996.

# Part One:
## Taking Action to Improve Basic Skills

2.1. The Government is already doing much to tackle the long-standing issue of low achievement in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy in this country. It has put in place a *comprehensive programme of policies and initiatives* which ensure that individuals' basic skill needs are addressed from pre-school to adulthood. These measures are designed to tackle literacy and numeracy in a way which is *focused and relevant*. Our policies at national level are reinforced by a wide range of *locally based initiatives*. All the existing measures are firmly embedded within a *rigorous framework of standards* which underpins their overall effectiveness.

## Children: Pre-School to Age 16

2.2. The Government has set in place a wide range of policies to drive up standards of achievement for pre-school and school-age children. Some of these policies are entirely about improving basic skills. Most, however, go wider and cover either the core subjects of English, mathematics and science or the full school curriculum. Together, they will ensure that the needs of all children, whatever their level of attainment, are identified and addressed.

2.3. The policies fall into three broad groups:

- policies to identify and meet all pupils' needs;
- policies to improve the quality of teaching;
- policies to challenge current standards and promote school performance.

### Identifying and Meeting All Pupils' Needs

2.4. First and foremost, we must "get it right first time". Giving young children a solid grounding in basic skills from the start will reduce the need for remedial action later on. Good early education provides an essential foundation. The Government aims to provide this for every 4 year old through the **Nursery Education Voucher Scheme** which will be implemented in England from April 1997. The Scheme will ensure that, for the first time, pre-school children will work towards common learning outcomes (including mathematics, language and literacy) for school entry at age 5.

2.5. Schools and teachers need to be very clear about pupils' capabilities when they enter school, so that they can build on what has already been achieved. **Baseline assessment** – focusing on early literacy and numeracy – of all children on their entry to primary school is an important new development which will help teachers to understand their pupils' needs, provide valuable information to guide schools' targeting of resources and give a baseline for measuring future improvement. Nation-wide baseline assessment will start on a voluntary basis from September 1997 and will be put on a statutory basis from September 1998 when over 600,000 pupils will be involved. The Government will support this initiative with some £9 million in 1997-98.

2.6. Since 1988, the **National Curriculum** has required a broad and balanced programme of teaching but it now places greater emphasis on literacy and numeracy within English and mathematics. 1996 National Curriculum assessment results show that standards in English and mathematics are rising. In the five years since the introduction of tests at age 7, the number of pupils achieving the expected level in reading and mathematics has risen by ten percentage points. We want to build on this encouraging progress. From 1997, National Curriculum tests will provide a more rigorous assessment of literacy and numeracy, including, for example: a compulsory reading comprehension test for most 7 year olds; pilots of new mental arithmetic tests for 11 and 14 year olds; and a pilot of a new test of grammar, spelling and punctuation for 14 year olds. These new features will reinforce the measures already in place and help to improve standards.

2.7. About 16% of all pupils in England have been identified as having Special Educational Needs (SEN). The majority of these children will, with appropriate support, be able to acquire basic skills, and in many cases to progress much further. The early identification and assessment of SEN – including specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia – is therefore essential if we are to raise national levels of achievement in basic skills.

**Table 3** Percentage of 7 year olds nationally: 1996 Teacher Assessment Results

| National Curriculum | % achieving each level of English | % achieving each level of Speaking & Listening | % achieving each level of Reading | % achieving each level of Writing | % achieving each level of Mathematics |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Level 1 | 18 | 16 | 18 | 18 | 16 |
| Level 2 | 62 | 63 | 51 | 67 | 66 |
| Level 3 | 17 | 19 | 27 | 9 | 16 |
| Level 4+ | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Denotes expected achievement level of the average 7 year old

**Table 4** Percentage of 7 year olds nationally: 1996 Test Results

| National Curriculum | % achieving each level of Reading | % achieving each level of Writing | % achieving each level of Mathematics |
|---|---|---|---|
| Level 1 | 18 | 15 | 15 |
| Level 2 | 48 | 73 | 63 |
| Level 3 | 30 | 6 | 19 |
| Level 4+ | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Denotes expected achievement level of the average 7 year old

**Notes for tables**

0% represents some pupils but less than 0.5%. Figures exclude pupils who are working towards level 1 but have not yet achieved the standard required for level 1, and those who were not awarded a level because of exemption, disapplication, absence or other reasons.



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**Table 5** Percentage of 11 year olds nationally - 1996 Teacher Assessment & Test Results

| National Curriculum | % achieving each level of English | | % achieving each level of Mathematics | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | TA | Test | TA | Test |
| Level 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Level 2 | 8 | 6 | 7 | 5 |
| Level 3 | 30 | 30 | 31 | 34 |
| **Level 4** | **45** | **45** | **44** | **40** |
| Level 5 | 15 | 12 | 16 | 14 |
| Level 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Denotes expected achievement level of the average 11 year old

**Table 6** Percentage of 14 year olds nationally - 1996 Teacher Assessment & Test Results

| National Curriculum | % achieving each level of English | | % achieving each level of Mathematics | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | TA | Test | TA | Test |
| Level 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Level 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Level 3 | 11 | 10 | 12 | 11 |
| Level 4 | 24 | 23 | 24 | 23 |
| **Level 5** | **30** | **31** | **27** | **23** |
| Level 6 | 21 | 18 | 23 | 22 |
| Level 7 | 9 | 7 | 11 | 10 |
| Level 8 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Level EP | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Denotes expected achievement level of the average 14 year old

**Notes for tables**

**TA** – Teacher Assessment. **EP** – represents exceptional performance. Figures exclude pupils who are working towards level 1 but have not yet achieved the standard required for level 1, and those who were not awarded a level because of exemption, disapplication, absence or other reasons. A typical 14 year old is expected to achieve level 5-6



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In 1994, the **SEN Code of Practice** was introduced to provide a clear framework for identifying and supporting children with special educational needs and to raise the standard of provision for them. It has already had a positive impact: the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) reported in 1996[1] that the Code had "led to significant improvements in both the planning and provision made for children with SEN."

2.8. Parents and families also have a valuable role to play in improving literacy and numeracy. The **Family Literacy** initiative aims to help parents with poor literacy levels improve these skills together with their children. Following four very successful pilots, the initiative has been extended to 35 projects in 33 Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and will be further extended in 1997/98 to include 215 courses in 52 LEAs. The aim is for Family Literacy to feature in the work of all LEAs by the year 2000.

2.9. There are also a number of very effective voluntary initiatives. **Volunteer Reading Help**, for example, links trained volunteers to children aged 6-11 who are having difficulty with their reading. In 1995/96 nearly 4,000 children were helped through this initiative which is supported by an annual Government grant.

**Family Literacy**

Between 1993 and 1995, four pilots were run in North Tyneside, Norfolk, Liverpool and Cardiff, based in or near primary schools.

The benefits from the pilots included:

- the proportion of school-age children who had not yet made the transition to writing fell from 62% to 43%;
- 91% of parents who started the course completed it. Of these 95% gained partial accreditation in the basic skills certificate, Wordpower;
- 12 weeks after the course, 70% of parents had started a further course.

[1] *The Implementation of the Code of Practice*. OFSTED, 1996.



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## Improving the Quality of Teaching

2.10. Children's progress in literacy and numeracy depends crucially on the knowledge and skills of their teachers. In order to support improvements in this area, the Government has asked the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) to draw up for consultation a **National Curriculum for Initial Teacher Training**, starting with primary English and mathematics. The new arrangements will ensure that all primary teachers have a sound knowledge of English and mathematics to underpin their teaching and are trained in effective teaching and assessment methods. The new curriculum for primary English and mathematics will be implemented from September 1997. It will be followed in September 1998 by a training curriculum for secondary English and mathematics.

2.11. The Government has also taken direct action to help improve the teaching of reading, writing and number. the **National Literacy and Numeracy Project** was established in September 1996 in partnership with OFSTED, the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) and the Basic Skills Agency (BSA). The Project is designed to drive up standards of literacy and numeracy achieved by age 11 by directing and supporting 25 centres (see Figure 2) working with 26 LEAs around the country to improve the teaching of reading, writing and number in primary schools. Over five years, the Project will have supported change in over 2,000 schools – 10% of all primary schools – at a cost of some £25 million.

## Challenging Current Standards and Promoting School Improvement

2.12. Since 1992, schools' results have been open to public scrutiny through publication of secondary school **performance tables**. This has allowed parents and others to compare the performance of local schools with local and national averages, and challenged schools to raise standards. Secondary school performance tables covering 5,000 schools were published in November. The Government intends to publish in early March this year, for the first time, performance tables showing primary schools' results in National Curriculum Key Stage 2 tests and teacher assessments in English, mathematics and science, covering 14,500 schools. More detailed results are also published in school prospectuses and governors' annual reports.

Fig 2 Literacy and Numeracy Centres

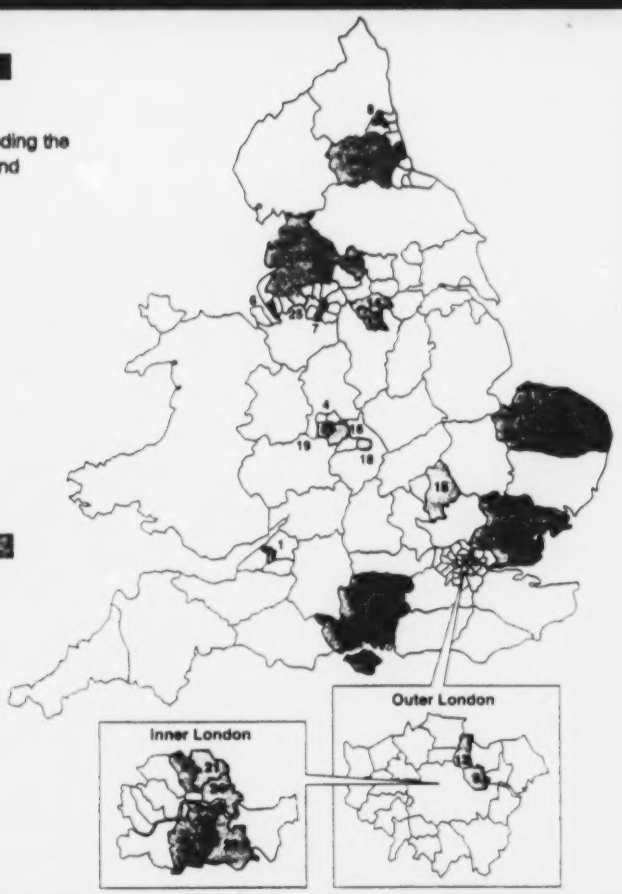
**Literacy Centres**

1. Bristol
2. Essex
3. Hampshire and Isle of Wight including the unitary authorities Southampton and Portsmouth
4. Sandwell
5. Islington
6. Liverpool
7. Manchester
8. Newcastle
9. Newham
10. Norfolk
11. Sheffield
12. Southwark and Lambeth
13. Waltham Forest

• Associate Centre Tower Hamlets

**Numeracy Centres**

14. Barnsley
15. Bedfordshire
16. Birmingham
17. Bradford
18. Coventry
19. Dudley
20. Durham
21. Hackney
22. Lancashire
23. Lewisham
24. Tower Hamlets
25. Wigan




Legislation currently before Parliament will, if enacted, require all schools to set targets for pupil attainment which will be published in annual reports to parents. The Prime Minister has recently announced the Government's intention that the reports should also include clear comparisons between the school's actual performance against its own targets and the performance of other schools. In addition, results of 7 and 14 year olds will be published in national performance tables.

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2.13. Since 1993, **regular schools' inspection** has led to published reports and required follow-up action to tackle weaknesses at school level. The LEAs' role is now coming under OFSTED scrutiny, and plans for **new powers of inspection** are designed to encourage effective support for those who need it alongside the maximum freedom for good schools. After inspection, LEAs will be required to draw up plans to address inspection findings. About twelve LEAs are expected to be reviewed each year.

2.14. These policies and initiatives are all designed to make sure that children get the best possible start in basic skills for life. They will help ensure that the substantial majority of pupils achieves the standards the National Curriculum lays down in English and mathematics at ages 7, 11 and 14. They will help to make tomorrow's workforce better equipped to meet the demanding challenges of the labour market and the increasing complexity of adult life. Of course, many of the measures will take time to have an impact on the workforce. The Government is therefore also acting now to tackle those basic skill weaknesses which exist for a small but significant minority of young people and adults already in the workforce, or seeking to join it.

## The Transition from School to Work

2.15. Ideally, no young person should leave school without having achieved a good standard of literacy and numeracy. The programme of measures in place for children up to the age of 16 should help ensure this. But there are some young people who do not manage to "get it right first time" and who need extra support to give them a better chance of gaining a foothold in the job market. Help is available for these young people to improve their basic skills either through **Further Education (FE)** or **TEC-supported training.** TECs are specifically encouraged to offer training towards Wordpower and Numberpower certification for those with basic skill difficulties. The **Careers Service** also plays an important role by directing young people with basic skill needs towards sources of help and support. The **youth service** makes a particular contribution by working with disaffected young people and helping them to develop 'life skills'.

2.16. The **Relaunch Strategy**, which was announced in the 14-19 White Paper, *Learning to Compete*, will give further impetus to ensuring that no young people enter the world of work ill-equipped with the basics to compete effectively for jobs. Relaunch will provide a new start for young people, drawing together action and innovation by local partnerships to identify disaffected 14-19 year olds and bring them back into learning. The Government has set aside £10 million to support partnership projects over the next three years, beginning in September 1997. The Relaunch prospectus[4] inviting bids for projects is being issued on 19 February.

2.17. In 1995/96, the **FE sector** helped over 160,000 students, many of them young people, on basic skill courses. The Government welcomes the continuing work of the Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC) Committee on Widening Participation in Further Education, under the chairmanship of Helena Kennedy QC, and looks forward to its full report to the Council in June. Renewed efforts by the FE sector, working with its key partners, to widen participation will help the education and training system to identify and help more effectively young people and adults with basic skills problems. The Government has also welcomed the recent report[5] from the Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities Committee, under Professor John Tomlinson, and now looks to the FEFC to take forward action, within available resources.

## Help for Adults

2.18. Poor basic skills prevent people from competing effectively for a wide range of jobs. Unemployed adults, especially those who have been unemployed for a long period, are more likely than the rest of the population to have severe problems with literacy and numeracy. The Employment Service provides special help to jobseekers with basic skill needs by helping them to identify these needs and directing them to specific support. Government-funded training programmes for unemployed people address basic skills weaknesses through **Training for Work** and **Pre-Vocational Pilots.** Next year, of the 180,000 people joining Training for Work, between 15,000 and 20,000

[4] *The Relaunch Strategy Partnership Projects Prospectus*, DfEE, 1997.

[5] *Inclusive Learning: Report of the Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities Committee*, FEFC, September 1996.

## The Basic Skills Agency

Since 1980, the Government has funded a national body, the Basic Skills Agency (formerly ALBSU), to develop basic skills programmes and materials for adults. In 1995, the remit of the Agency was extended to enable it to support the development of effective programmes in literacy and numeracy for young people as well as adults.

The BSA's work includes:

- funding the development of basic skills strategies in schools, colleges and other organisations;
- promotion to motivate young people and adults to improve their basic skills;
- developing innovative strategies to tackle basic skills;
- research into basic skills.

The Agency has forged a number of partnerships with education, health, housing and other bodies to improve basic skills standards. In recognition of their wider remit, the BSA's grant has been increased to £4.3 million for 1997-98.

will have severe literacy or numeracy problems. Providing help with basic skills in a vocational environment allows many of these people to achieve basic skills qualifications and get jobs. In 1997-98, pre-vocational training will be made available throughout England, with three times as many places being provided to offer help to some 30,000 unemployed people.

2.19 Some of those in work also have difficulties with reading, writing and numeracy. This makes them less able to cope with the increasingly complex demands of their jobs and can hamper their career prospects. Despite these problems, evidence suggests that employers do not invest significantly in basic skills training. A survey carried out in 1993 shows that only 14% of the 88% of employers providing some sort of training to their staff had a policy to address basic skills deficiencies. It is important that all employers, including small firms, recognise that improving the basic skills of their employees contributes to the overall performance and competitiveness of their companies. The Government is therefore keen to encourage more employers to

get involved in basic skills training – through, for example, **Employee Development Schemes.**

## Information Technology

2.20. **Information and Learning Technologies** have an important role to play in improving basic skills. An increasing number of CD-ROMs and other software packages are becoming available which can support the learning of basic skills. Where possible, the Government has included these in its initiatives to provide computers and software to schools. Information Technology is also an effective mechanism for delivering basic skills tuition to young people and adults and a number of colleges and other providers around the country are successfully using IT-supported learning programmes.

2.21. Many people need specific **English language support.** Over 10% of pupils are from ethnic minorities and many pupils and adults do not have English as their first language. Many of the strategies for improving basic skills – such as family involvement and high quality teaching, assessment and monitoring – will also help such pupils. Specific support to help meet the particular needs of ethnic minorities, and to help non-English speaking pupils master the English language and gain full access to the National Curriculum is provided by the Section 11 programme. This is administered by the Home Office, under Section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966, and with support from the Single Regeneration Budget. The Government announced last September a ten-point Action Plan to further raise the achievement of ethnic minority pupils. Targeted support for ethnic minorities, who need extra help with language skills, is also integrated into FE provision and TEC-delivered programmes.

2.22 The additional educational needs, including literacy and numeracy, of **travellers** and **displaced persons** are met through a specific grant paid under Section 488 of the Education Act 1996. All provision covered by the grant programme, which supports over 3,300 schools in England, aims to improve access to school and raise the achievement levels of children in these groups who are particularly at risk of educational failure.

# Part Two:
## The Way Ahead

## Further Action to Improve Basic Skills

3.1. The Government has considered its existing policies and initiatives to ensure that they offer appropriate and effective help with basic skills to all who need it. The main conclusions which the Government reached are that:

- existing measures as described in Part One of this document already provide a substantial programme of action to address a long-standing concern about basic skills in our education and training systems;
- further targeted and selective action can help to reinforce the impact of existing programmes and to drive up standards of achievement still further;
- there is scope, in consultation with all those involved, to improve the coherence and effectiveness of action at local level through closer partnership, better evaluation of what works successfully, and better dissemination of best practice.

3.2. The Government has decided upon an integrated package of new measures which builds upon the success of programmes already in place, both nationally and locally, and across all ages. Together, these measures will provide new opportunities for everyone to improve their basic skills for life.

### Children and Parents

3.3. First, the Government is inviting the **Basic Skills Agency**, working together with SCAA, OFSTED, the TTA and others with an interest:

- to pilot the development of **Family Numeracy**, following the success of the Family Literacy scheme. This would allow parents with numeracy difficulties to improve their skills, working together with their children aged between 3 and 5. Over the next year, a series of pilots will be run, including short programmes in infant schools and on Saturdays, twilight sessions at the workplace, and modules in Family Literacy courses. If successful, these models might be applied more widely;

- to take forward work to identify effective ways of **improving the performance of boys in literacy.** The aim will be to identify and increase the use of effective approaches to improving the literacy skills of boys in secondary schools, with particular attention to Key Stage 3. Recent National Curriculum and GCSE test results show girls consistently out-performing boys in English, particularly at Key Stages 2 and 3. The main target group of this new initiative will be those boys who are reading up to two years below their chronological age at the start of the academic year. Following an initial survey, BSA will run a series of pilot programmes from September 1997 onwards. Approaches will include: intensive short-term small groups; short, paired reading programmes; and the delivery of literacy skills through key areas of the curriculum;

- to conduct a feasibility study into the development of a **national basic skills helpline to inform and advise parents,** in order to further promote the part parents can play in the development of their children's basic skills. The study will establish whether there is a demand for such a service and how a high quality helpline might best operate. It will be carried out later this year and, if successful, will be followed by a pilot service in one region in England on a trial basis.

### Young People

3.4. Second, in conjunction with this document, the **Relaunch Strategy** bidding exercise is being launched. The Government expects to fund around fifteen projects in the first instance over eighteen months from September. It is expected that some of the successful partnership projects will focus on young people seeking to improve their basic skills for employment.

### Adults

3.5. Third, the Government is implementing major improvements in the help available to long-term unemployed adults with basic skills difficulties. These will help reinforce and sustain the 17% reduction in the last twelve months in the number of long-term unemployed people. These are:

- **extending Pre-Vocational Training** through TECs to all parts of England and a trebling in the number of places available at a cost of £60 million. Some 65-70% of the 30,000 long-term unemployed adults taking part in pre-vocational training are expected to receive help with basic skills;

- **testing, in ten areas, the impact of making payments to TECs for higher level basic skills qualifications within Training for Work.** This will build on the progress made in the last few years in paying for Entry level qualifications, and will give TECs more flexibility and greater incentives to extend basic skills training beyond that level. The pilots will give extra help to 1,000 long-term unemployed people at an additional cost of £0.5 million;

- **increasing the emphasis on literacy and numeracy in all 30 Project Work pilot areas.** All Employment Service Project Work advisors will be trained to identify basic skill problems and refer clients to the most suitable source of help;

- **offering intensive help with basic skills, including enhanced diagnostic services in five Project Work areas** at an additional cost of £5.8 million. Special training in literacy and numeracy will be available to people who enter the 13 weeks of work experience in the pilot areas.

3.6. Finally, the Government is funding a group of pilot projects to see how help with basic skills can be better integrated within **Employee Development Schemes** run by companies. The particular aim is to develop such schemes to attract employees, particularly traditional 'non-learners', including those with weak basic skills. These schemes encourage people to move on to further and more stretching learning which will enhance their position in the workforce and benefit their companies.

### Employee Development Schemes

The Government is supporting the following projects:

- **Peugeot Motor Company**: a basic/key skills specialist has been recruited to design and implement basic and key skills modules within the company's Assisted Development Programme (ADP) Employee Development Scheme. Courses are planned to start in February 1997;
- **Glass Training Ltd**: working with **Gregg and Co**, this Industry Training Organisation is running a series of voluntary 'fun learning' workshops, based around the TQM theme of customer service and encouraging employees to move on to further learning through a variety of means;
- **Lancaster University**: this project will help several firms with mature Employee Development Schemes to develop basic skills provision within them;
- **The Adult College, Lancaster**: this is helping several local firms to set up new Employee Development Schemes in which basic skills are imaginatively positioned and marketed from the start;
- **Essex TEC**: the TEC is working with three local firms to develop basic skills provision within their Employee Development Schemes.

## The Longer Term

3.7. These new measures will help to fill some existing gaps in provision by testing new ways of tackling basic skills needs and will reinforce and strengthen existing provision. Beyond that, however, it is also necessary to examine for the longer term:

i. **how to make the range of existing national and local provision for basic skills more effective in tackling the problem in every area.**

*Are all the relevant bodies and agencies working together to achieve the maximum benefit from the considerable resources (e.g. professional expertise, teaching materials, etc.) which are devoted to basic skills?*

*What mechanisms might be established to promote greater sharing of resources locally and to ensure that these resources are further built upon?*

*How could better use be made of the respective roles of local organisations and interests (schools, parents, colleges, local authorities, libraries, prisons, voluntary organisations, HE institutions, TECs, employers, etc.) to obtain maximum benefit from local resources?*

ii. **how far it is possible to identify best practice in the many different local activities aimed at improving basic skills.**

*What arrangements might be put in place to enable local priorities on basic skills to be more effectively identified? How might such arrangements help to identify and address gaps in local provision?*

*Are there examples of good practice which have been successful in raising awareness of the importance of basic skills, securing local commitment, improving tuition, and putting in place remedial action where necessary, which might be applied elsewhere?*

*What lessons can be drawn from successful practice which could inform and improve other local initiatives?*

iii. **whether there is a case for improved practice, particularly to help achieve greater coherence within overall provision at the key points of transition between schools and from school to work.**

*Are current arrangements for transferring information at points of transition for young people (i.e. from nursery to school, between classes, from school to school, and from school to college) working well? How might we improve the content and flow of information so that it supports effectively a child's progress in basic skills?*

*Are there ways in which the information flows might be improved for young people in the transition from school to work or for adults as they move in and out of employment or between jobs? How might these impact on FE and HE institutions, employers etc?*

**iv. how far research and evaluation of what works and the identification of successful practice in different sectors of education and in training can be made more widely available to all concerned.**

*How might the key organisations and interests, both national and local, work more effectively – separately and/or together – to ensure wider availability and dissemination of good practice?*

*How might more effective use be made of Information Technology to improve the range and quality of provision and the sharing of information?*

*Are there existing models of effective coordination which might be applied more generally?*

3.8. With these issues in mind, the Government has asked the Basic Skills Agency to organise a series of regional conferences this spring bringing together practitioners, providers, employers, and other bodies to explore ways to achieve greater coherence and value for money in the range of local provision for basic skills. A report of the conference discussions and case studies and other material illustrating successful practice will be published later this year.

3.9. Comments and views on any part of this document would be welcome. Comments should be sent in writing by 30 April 1997 to:

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In line with the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, responses to this document may be made available on request unless respondents state that they wish their response to remain confidential.

## Annex 1
## Definitions

### Functional Literacy and Numeracy

There are no precise or universally agreed definitions of 'functional literacy and numeracy' or 'low achievement'. The Basic Skills Agency has, however, drawn up a framework of standards describing the different levels which people need of literacy and numeracy when undertaking different tasks. It has mapped these requirements to the job market, concluding that, while there are still some jobs where literacy and numeracy requirements are minimal, BSA Level 1 in Communication and Foundation Level 1 in Number are the minimum levels at which most people can begin to compete effectively in the labour market. Attainment below these levels is generally defined by BSA as "poor". This measure of low achievement and its broad equivalents within the National Curriculum, GCSE and GNVQ/NVQ Key Skills provide a useful guide for the assessment of the scale of the basic skills problem. (See Tables 7 and 8.)

### Key Skills

Key skills are the skills needed in a wide range of employment settings and for lifetime learning. They build on requirements under the National Curriculum, in particular in relation to English and mathematics, but are specifically designed to reflect the application of skills in a realistic work setting. These key skills are now an integral part of the GNVQ and NVQ qualifications framework. Defined to specific levels they are structured into six specific categories: Communication (including oral and graphical communication), the Application of Number, Information Technology, Improving Own Learning and Performance, Problem Solving and Working with Others.

Table 7 BSA Standards Outlined

| BSA standards | Examples of competencies required[1] |
|---|---|
| **COMMUNICATION** | |
| Foundation | • Use and act on simple text (up to six sentences)<br>• Understand a sign with a simple message<br>• Write a short note |
| Level 1 | • Understand and act on letter up to one page long<br>• Consult a reference source<br>• Complete a simple application form |
| Level 2 | • Use material from more than one written source<br>• Use a library reference system<br>• Write material in a specified format e.g. a formal letter |
| Level 3 | • Select and evaluate materials from several written sources<br>• Write material in a variety of appropriate formats |
| **NUMERACY** | |
| Below Foundation | |
| Foundation | • Record simple numerical information e.g. by counting small batches<br>• Simple calculations |
| Level 1 | • Simple stock-taking<br>• Give change and calculate simple discounts on up to 20 items |
| Level 2 | • Calculate complex discounts or use foreign currency<br>• Stock-taking<br>• Plan and monitor large amounts of time, money or spending |

Denotes 'low achievement'

[1] Provides only a few selected examples of the type of competencies required at each level

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Direct comparisons between individual levels of attainment in the BSA Standards and those of other literacy and numeracy measures are not possible. The following chart, however, illustrates some of the very general links between the different literacy and numeracy measures.

**Table 8** BSA Standards and Other Literacy and Numeracy Measures

| BSA standards | National Curriculum Levels | GCSE | GNVQ/NVQ Key Skills |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Communication** | **English** | **English** | **Communication** |
| | 1 | | |
| | 2 | | |
| Foundation | 3 | | Level 1 (Foundation) |
| ⬇ | 4 | G | ⬇ |
| Level 1 | 5 | F | ⬇ |
| ⬇ | | E | |
| | 6 | D | |
| Level 2 | 7 | C | Level 2 (Intermediate) |
| | | | ⬇ |
| **Numeracy** | **Mathematics** | **Mathematics** | **Application of Numbers** |
| | 1 | | |
| | 2 | | |
| Foundation | | | |
| ⬇ | 3 | | |
| ⬇ | | | |
| Level 1 | 4 | G | Level 1 (Foundation) |
| ⬇ | 5 | F | ⬇ |
| ⬇ | 6 | E | ⬇ |
| Level 2 | | D | |
| | 7 | C | Level 2 (Intermediate) |
| | | | ⬇ |

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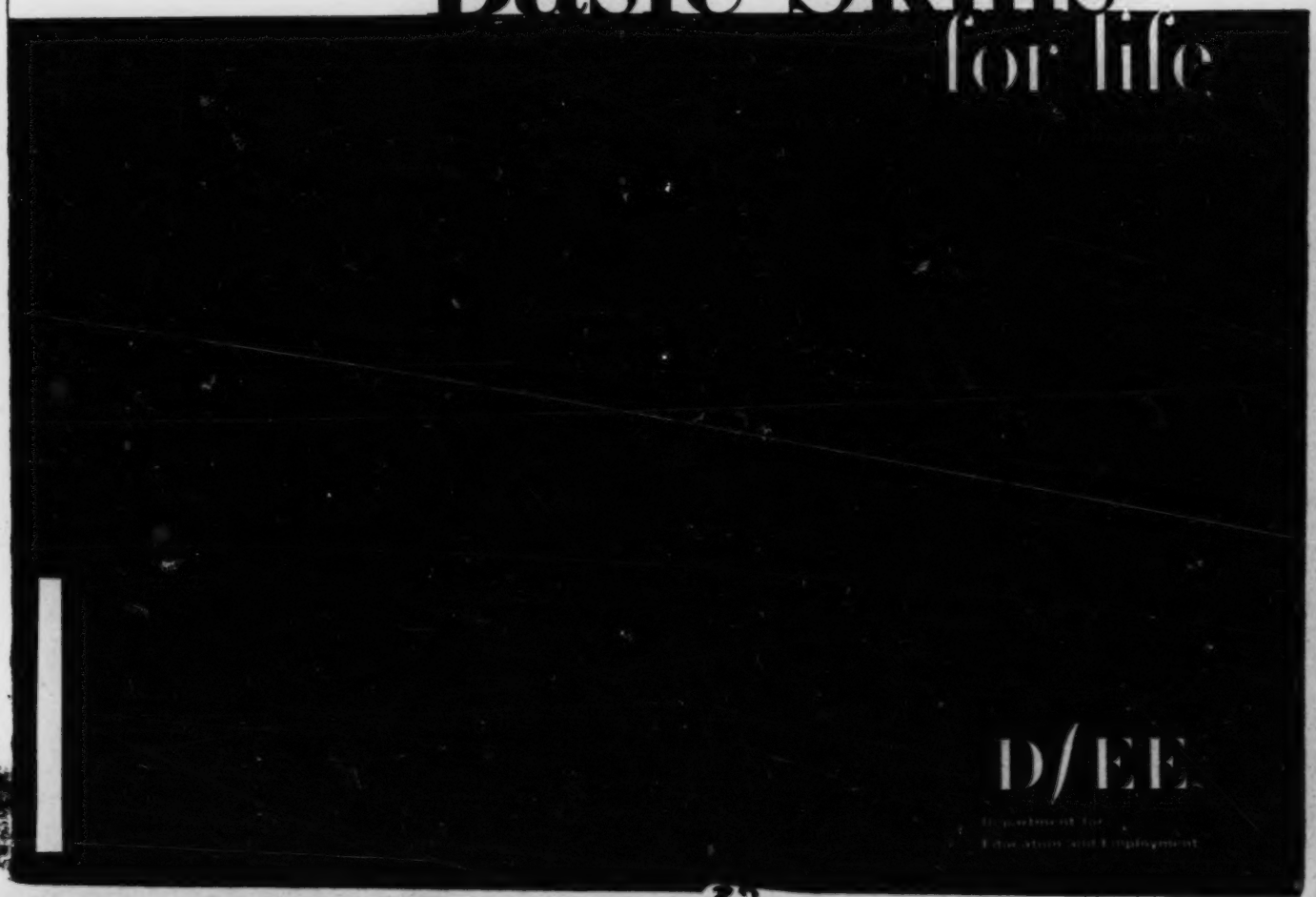
# Basic Skills for life



# Basic Skills from 3-16

Government policies to drive up standards of achievement for pre-school and school-age children fall into three groups:

- Policies to identify and meet pupils' needs

From this April, under the *Nursery Education Voucher Scheme* all parents will be entitled to a voucher which they can use for one year's pre-school education of their choice.

So that schools can be clear about pupils' capabilities when they enter school, *Baseline Assessment* starts voluntarily this September and will be put on a statutory basis from September 1998.

The revised *National Curriculum* places greater emphasis on the basic skills and its assessment is being made increasingly rigorous in reading, writing (including grammar and spelling) and arithmetic.

*Family Literacy* works with small groups of school or pre-school pupils and their parents with poor literacy levels, so that they can develop their skills together.

- Policies to improve the quality of teaching

Plans for a *National Curriculum for Initial Teacher Training*, to ensure new teachers know how to teach basic skills, were recently published and are out for consultation.

The *Specialist Teacher Assistant Pilot Scheme*, launched in 1994, is training classroom assistants to offer targeted support to qualified teachers in their work with primary pupils on literacy and numeracy.

The *National Literacy and Numeracy Project*, with 25 LEA-based centres, focuses on improving basic skills by better organisation and more effective teaching.

- Policies to raise standards and promote school improvement

Subject to legislation, from next year schools will have *to set and publish targets* for raising pupils' standards alongside past performance. The Government intends to consult on proposals that reports to parents will include comparisons between actual performance against these targets and the performance of other schools. It further intends that results of 7 and 14 year-olds will be published in national performance tables.

*Regular schools inspection* since 1993 has led to published reports and action to tackle weaknesses. Subject to legislation, weakest schools are subject to *special measures* to raise standards rapidly. *LEAs*, who have a key role in raising standards and target setting will now be inspected regularly by OFSTED working with the Audit Commission.

## New Initiatives

Three new initiatives will build on and reinforce existing policies:

*Family Numeracy:* To encourage parents to improve their own numeracy skills and support their children's numeracy skills. This will build on experience gained from *Family Literacy*.

*Basic Skills Helpline for Parents:* To investigate whether there is a demand for such a helpline and what information and advice might best be provided.

*Improving the Performance of Boys in Literacy:* To improve standards among secondary school boys, particularly at Key Stage 3. Though performance of boys and girls continues to improve, boys still lag behind, especially at Key Stages 2 and 3.



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# Nursery Education

## Key Facts

Good early education provides an essential foundation for progress in the basic skills. The Government has taken steps to provide this for every 4 year old through the Nursery Education Voucher Scheme.

The Scheme, to be implemented throughout England in April 1997, aims to make available for all 4 year olds three terms of good quality nursery education in the state, private or voluntary sectors. Parents will be able to choose the place which they believe best equips their children for their future education and development.

The Scheme will ensure that, for the first time, pre-school children will work towards common learning outcomes including mathematics, language and literacy for school entry at age 5.

## Costs

£435m of new money over three years starting from 1997-98 is being put into the Scheme. It will cost around £674m a year for England:

- £529m of this will be deducted from Local Education Authorities' (LEAs) current spending on 4 year olds and recycled through vouchers worth up to £1,100 each;
- £145m will be new money in 1997-98, of which £20m will be available for inspection and administration.

LEAs will regain deducted funding through vouchers if schools recruit the same number of 4 year olds each term as in the school year 1995/96.

## Key Statistics

Phase 1 of the Scheme started in four local authority areas – Westminster, Wandsworth, Kensington & Chelsea and Norfolk – in April 1996. In these areas:

- in summer term 1996, 91% of eligible children claimed vouchers, and 91% of these were used;
- in autumn term 1996, 93% of eligible children claimed vouchers, and 91% of this larger number were used;
- over 1,100 providers have joined the Scheme.

90% of 4 year olds receive some form of pre-school education in maintained, private and voluntary sectors, but the amount and quality of provision and choice available to parents varies considerably.

## Good Practice

All providers have been sent a copy of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority's (SCAA) publication on recommended, desirable learning outcomes, which includes guidance on good practice. SCAA will shortly be providing further guidance on good practice.

Inspection of educational provision for 4 year olds in private and voluntary sectors by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) will help lever up standards. The first overview report to the Secretary of State for Education and Employment is currently being published.

DfEE is funding a 5 year, £1.4m research project to identify those characteristics of pre-school education which are most effective in promoting children's progress. This research is being undertaken by a team from the University of London Institute of Education.

In Norfolk:

- 800 additional nursery class places have been made available as a direct result of vouchers;
- vouchers have enabled 300 more children to attend pre-schools (playgroups) and 1,300 to attend more pre-school sessions.

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# Baseline Assessment

## Key Facts

As the Secretary of State for Education and Employment announced at the beginning of February, all children are to be assessed on entry to primary school under a National Framework. Early literacy and numeracy will be the focus of this assessment which will be introduced in schools from September 1997.

Baseline assessment will:

- show schools where resources should be targeted to raise standards;
- show teachers what children can do so they can match work to children's needs and abilities;
- provide a baseline for measuring progress between entering school and at age 7 (value added);
- provide valuable information for parents;
- be manageable for teachers.

This nation-wide baseline assessment will start on a voluntary basis from September 1997 and will be put on a statutory basis from September 1998. The School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) has been consulting widely on the issues involved, building on local initiatives. It is now looking at the accreditation procedures for baseline assessment schemes and the guidance required.

## Costs

The Government will support the initiative with some £9m in 1997-98, including £8.5m through specific Grants for Educational Support and Training (GEST).

## Key Statistics

Over 600,000 pupils will be involved in baseline assessment.

## Good Practice

Over 50% of Local Education Authorities (LEAs) already have local baseline assessment schemes in place. Examples of well-established schemes can be seen in Birmingham and Wandsworth. There are also commercial assessments in use. The National Framework will allow schools to use their preferred accredited scheme, whilst guaranteeing standards.



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# National Curriculum and Assessment

## Key Facts

At primary level, the revised National Curriculum allows teachers to devote more time to teaching the basic skills. It places greater emphasis on literacy generally and on number for younger children.

From 1997 National Curriculum tests will provide a more rigorous assessment of literacy and numeracy. New features will include:

- a reading comprehension test for most 7 year olds;
- a separate result for spelling at age 7 which will be reported to parents;
- a new test of grammar, spelling and punctuation for 14 year olds;
- a new mental arithmetic test for 11 and 14 year olds;
- a non-calculator paper in the mathematics test for 11 and 14 year olds.

## Costs

Teaching of the revised National Curriculum has been supported in 1996-97 by £16.7m of specific Grants for Educational Support and Training (GEST) to help primary teachers improve their subject knowledge. In 1997-98, 40% of the GEST funding will be allocated to mathematics courses to ensure that primary teachers are able to teach the subject confidently and well.

National Curriculum assessment costs will be between £50m and £60m in 1996-97 and 1997-98, including expenditure on training for teachers.

## Key Statistics

National Curriculum assessment results for 1996 show that about 80% of 7 year olds achieved the expected level of performance in the basics, as did between 54% and 65% of 11 and 14 year olds.

There is still much room for improvement but the results show that standards in English and mathematics are rising.

- 11 year olds' test results in English and mathematics went up by 10 percentage points between 1995 and 1996.
- In the five years since the introduction of tests at age 7, the percentage of pupils achieving the expected level in reading and mathematics has risen from about 70% to about 80%.



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# Family Literacy

## Key Facts

Family Literacy aims to help parents with poor literacy levels improve their skills together with their children. Between 1993 and 1995, four pilots were run in North Tyneside, Norfolk, Liverpool and Cardiff, based in or near primary schools. These involved children aged 3-6. They were a resounding success, providing good value for money with literacy levels for both parents and children raised and sustained up to nine months later.

The initiative has been extended to 35 projects in 33 Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and now includes children in years 4 (primary) and 7 (secondary) and minority linguistic families. It will be further extended in 1997/98 to include 215 courses in 52 LEAs. The eventual aim is, that by the year 2000, Family Literacy will feature in the work of all LEAs. Where appropriate, links are made with the local Literacy and/or Numeracy Centre.

## Costs

The extension of Family Literacy is one of four new initiatives receiving funding from the Grants for Educational Support and Training (GEST) 1997-98 programme budget with £1.5m being made available.

## Key Statistics

There will be continuing evaluation of the initiative. The benefits so far include:

- substantial increases in literacy-related home activities, especially those carried out jointly by parents and children, with the proportion of school-age children who had not yet made the transition to writing falling from 62% to 43%;
- 91% of parents who started the course completed it and of these 95% gained partial or full accreditation in the basic skills certificate, Wordpower. 12 weeks after the course, 70% of parents had started a further course.

## Good Practice

The four pilot programmes in North Tyneside, Norfolk, Liverpool and Cardiff continue to run successfully. Family Literacy courses follow the model established in the pilots:

- short, intensive courses for around 12 parents and children lasting around 100 hours over a three month period. Parents work on their own literacy and learn how to extend the help they have received to their children. The children are given intensive early years teaching with a strong emphasis on writing and talking as well as reading. Parents and children then work together in joint sessions;
- the new courses include programmes for linguistic minority families. These are proving very effective. In Stockport, for example, speakers of Turkish, Punjabi, Urdu, Cantonese and Arabic have been participating with attendance rates of over 95%. The course benefits from close planning and collaboration between the school involved, the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Service and LEA officers.



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NEW INITIATIVE



# Family Numeracy

## Key Facts

Family Numeracy is an initiative to help raise standards by encouraging parents to improve their own numeracy skills and become more involved in supporting their children. It will build on experience gained from the Family Literacy initiative, which shows that parents want to help their children and are keen to extend this to numeracy.

The Basic Skills Agency (BSA), which has been involved in developing Family Literacy, will also develop Family Numeracy, in consultation with the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA), the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), the Teacher Training Agency (TTA), the network of Numeracy Centres, IMPACT and other organisations working in this field.

BSA will pilot cost-effective models of family numeracy for parents and children aged 3-5 years, focusing on geographical areas where under-attainment is a problem. Parents will brush up their own numeracy and learn to help their children's at home.

Pilots, from April 1997, may include:

- sessions based in infant/primary schools;
- Saturday schools;
- twilight sessions at the workplace (to encourage fathers' involvement);
- adding numeracy to existing Family Literacy courses.

## Key Outcomes

BSA will produce material for use by schools and others working in the field, including information on best practice. They will also work with the relevant national and regional bodies to ensure the widest promotion of successful models. In addition, BSA will explore the scope to extend Family Numeracy, including commercial sponsorship. Pilots will be independently evaluated for effectiveness and coherence with other initiatives.

## Costs

The cost of the initiative is estimated at £160,000.

### Count and Figure It Out Together

BSA will produce *Count and Figure It Out Together*, a new magazine for parents and children aged 3-5 years. This will complement the Agency's *Read and Write Together* magazine, which is distributed free by 97 % of LEAs to their primary schools. 650,000 copies of the magazine will be produced once a term, to allow distribution to an entire age cohort.



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# A Basic Skills Helpline for Parents

## Key Facts

The Basic Skills Agency (BSA) will investigate whether there is a demand for a helpline for parents who want to help their children with basic literacy and numeracy skills but do not know where to start, and how high quality information and advice might best be provided.

*The Basic Skills Advice Service*

The Service will aim to reach a wide audience and help to support partnership between parents and schools for more effective learning. In consultation with other agencies, Local Education Authorities (LEAs), schools, and other interested bodies, BSA will conduct a small scale feasibility study (April – August 1997) to determine the need for a national telephone helpline.

The feasibility study will investigate:

- whether experience of such a service exists in other industrialised countries;
- the demand for such a service;
- key features of the service including information material and quality advice;
- potential for developing collaborative partnerships with broadcasting services to promote the Service.

BSA will also review sources of information currently available to parents and alternative approaches to assisting parents whose children have basic skills needs.

Should the feasibility study prove successful, the service will be piloted and evaluated in one English region (September-December 1997) to determine whether a nationwide service would best meet the need and be cost effective.

## Costs

The estimated cost of the feasibility study and pilot is £65,000.



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NEW INITIATIVE



# Improving the Performance of Boys in Literacy

## Key Facts

Boys are still lagging behind girls in literacy and need more help at secondary school:

- At Key Stages 2 and 3 in particular, boys are under-achieving;
- In 1996, only half of boys reached the expected levels of performance for their age compared with two-thirds of girls.

*Action to improve boys' performance in literacy*

The main target group will be those boys who are up to two years behind their reading age, in particular at Key Stage 3.

- DfEE is working with the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA), the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) and the Teacher Training Agency (TTA);
- The Basic Skills Agency (BSA) will build on work already done to identify and increase the use of effective approaches.

*Next Steps*

- A survey will be commissioned in April to identify effective programmes for boys;
- A series of pilots will be run in secondary schools from September. Models for the pilots could include:
  - intensive short-term instruction in literacy in small groups;
  - short paired reading programmes;
  - tuition in literacy skills using specific areas of the curriculum.
- The BSA will produce additional support material for schools including:
  - reading and spelling material linked to areas of the curriculum;
  - A CD-ROM multi-media teaching programme adapted for secondary schools in conjunction with IBM.

The selected pilots will be independently evaluated. The BSA then plans to circulate published material, organise conferences and liaise with relevant national and regional bodies to ensure wide-scale promotion of successful models.

## Costs

The estimated cost for the programme is £175,000.



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# National Curriculum for Initial Teacher Training

## Key Facts

Pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy depends on the knowledge and skills of their teachers. In order to support improvements in this area, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment has asked the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) to draw up for consultation a National Curriculum for Initial Teacher Training, starting with primary English and mathematics. The consultation exercise will begin in February 1997.

The new arrangements will ensure that all new primary teachers:

- have a sound knowledge of English and mathematics to underpin their teaching;
- know in detail what their pupils must be taught in order to make progress;
- are trained in effective teaching and assessment methods and know how and when to use them.

The new training curriculum for primary English and mathematics will be implemented from September 1997, alongside tighter standards for all training courses. It will be followed in September 1998 by a training curriculum for secondary English, mathematics and science for all age groups.

## Costs

In 1996-97, the budget for Initial Teacher Training, administered by the Teacher Training Agency, is £149.4m. Of this, £86m is for primary training and £63.4m for secondary training.

## Key Statistics

In total 28,464 trainees began Initial Teacher Training courses in September 1996 (12,485 primary, 15,979 secondary).



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# National Literacy and Numeracy Project

## Key Facts

The National Literacy and Numeracy Project is designed to improve standards of literacy and numeracy at age 11 by directing and supporting work in Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to improve the teaching of reading, writing and number in primary schools.

The Project was established in September 1996 by DfEE in partnership with the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), the Teacher Training Agency (TTA), the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) and the Basic Skills Agency (BSA).

Two Project Directors based at a National Centre in Reading are working with LEA consultants and identified teachers in specific schools to ensure that:

- existing standards of literacy and numeracy are known and targets for improvement are set and monitored;
- time is set aside for direct, whole class teaching of literacy and numeracy to a national framework;
- teachers have the necessary skills to improve standards;
- head teachers manage their schools to secure effective teaching of literacy and numeracy.

## Costs

The Project will support spending of some £25m by LEAs, over a five year period. There will be additional central spending on project management and development, and on testing – some £1m in 1997-98.

## Key Statistics

The Project is supporting 25 centres working with 26 LEAs around the country.

Groups of schools will be directly helped by each centre for two year periods over the life of the Project. By the end of five years it will have supported change in over 2,000 schools – 10% of all primary schools.

Dissemination of project materials should affect practice in all schools.

## Good Practice

The Project Directors have already:

- developed frameworks which give teachers specific objectives for each school term or year;
- trained all LEA consultants and prepared materials for them to train local teachers;
- worked with SCAA on the development of annual tests to identify current levels of attainment and monitor progress.

The Project is keeping in close touch with related work, also supported by DfEE funding, in Barking and Dagenham which trains teachers in the use of direct, whole class instruction supported by common lesson plans. This is based on models currently used in Switzerland.



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# Specialist Teacher Assistant Scheme

## Key Facts

The Specialist Teacher Assistant (STA) pilot scheme was launched in September 1994. It is designed to provide a group of specially trained Classroom Assistants (CAs) with the skills to support qualified teachers in their work with primary pupils on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, especially at Key Stage 1.

Successful students gain a STAR (STA Record) which sets out the competences they have achieved. The course leads to a qualification with recognised currency within Higher Education (HE) or Further Education (FE), allowing for access to further study as appropriate.

## Costs

The Government has invested over £4m on training STAs since the scheme was launched. It has allocated (subject to Parliamentary approval) a further £3.5m to Local Education Authorities (LEAs) over the current and next academic years for a third round of the scheme.

Under the previous two rounds, 40 training providers, mainly HE and FE institutions, were funded direct through DfEE's programme funds.

## Key Statistics

51 LEAs in England are taking part in the scheme. By the end of the third round about 4,000 CAs should have received STA training. There are nearly 35,000 CAs in England, excluding Nursery Nurses and Special Educational Needs (SEN) support staff, many of whom are employed part-time. Most CAs do not have any FE or HE qualifications nor any qualifications specific to their work.

## Good Practice

The STA scheme is helping to improve the knowledge and competences of this large body of support staff in schools. Evaluation of the scheme by a team led by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) indicates that STAs can make a real difference in the classroom by giving qualified teachers broader and better informed help to ensure that children are given a strong foundation in the three Rs.

Numerous examples of the effectiveness of this kind of basic training are beginning to emerge. A future study of the deployment in schools of trained STAs will show their contribution to the educational experience of young children.

Clear training strategies and good partnerships between schools and school-based mentors, training providers and LEAs are essential to the success of STA training.



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# School Performance Tables and Target Setting

## Key Facts

Since 1992 the Government has published performance tables of secondary school examination results. The Government intends to publish in early March this year, for the first time, performance tables showing primary schools' results in National Curriculum Key Stage 2 tests and teacher assessment in English, mathematics and science.

Publication of results encourages higher standards by supporting parental choice. It also allows schools to look at what others in similar circumstances are achieving, and can raise the sights of schools with relatively poor performance.

Schools have been encouraged to set targets for improvement in key areas. The current Education Bill will formalise this by requiring schools to set and publish targets for future achievement alongside their past performance. The targets, which will be subject to consultation, will focus on the core National Curriculum subjects – English, mathematics and science. Specific targets for improvement would be published alongside past results in prospectuses and governors' annual reports from 1998.

## Key Statistics

Secondary school performance tables on 5,000 schools have been published.

Primary school performance tables would cover 14,500 schools with pupils aged 11.

## Good Practice

The joint Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED)/DfEE publication *Setting Targets to Raise Standards* includes many examples of named schools using targets effectively. For example:

*Burntwood School, Wandsworth:* The ethos of this girls' secondary school promotes high expectations. These are set out in a written learning agreement between each new entrant, the parents and the principal. There has been an increase of 17 percentage points in GCSE performance (higher grades) over three years. This has been achieved by:

- individual targets set twice yearly or termly in consultation with every pupil;
- active involvement of parents;
- a parental curriculum guide and homework timetable;
- specific responsibility of named teachers;
- reinforcement at all levels of the high priority of academic achievement.

Students value the high expectations of staff: "they don't just want you to succeed – they work hard at ways of getting you there". The targets are challenging but manageable, suited to the individual and clearly understood by all three parties (schools, parents and pupils).



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# Improvement through Inspection of Schools and LEAs

## Key Facts

Since 1993 a system of regular, independent school inspections have been carried out, with published reports on quality and standards available to parents and others. Schools must respond to the findings with an action plan designed to address weaknesses and build on strengths. The quality of education in basic skills is an important strand in these reports.

The weakest schools – those failing to provide an acceptable education – become subject to special measures. This involves targeted extra support by Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and others, and close monitoring by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), until they are restored to health (or occasionally, closed). Already many schools have recovered within two years of the original inspection.

LEAs have a role in:

- monitoring standards in the schools they maintain;
- supporting seriously weak and failing schools;
- challenging all schools to set and meet targets for higher achievement.

Subject to the current Education Bill, OFSTED (with the Audit Commission) will inspect the work of LEAs in support of their schools, leading to action plans to remedy any weakness.

## Key Statistics

Since 1993 over half of all schools in the country have been inspected, and work is on target to complete the initial sweep (24,000 schools) by 1998.

Three LEAs have already been voluntarily reviewed by OFSTED and two other reviews are underway. Following the new legislation it is expected that around 12 LEAs a year will be inspected.

## Good Practice

The Audit Commission already reviews spending by LEAs. The new legislation enables them to carry out reviews jointly with OFSTED, so that the educational outcomes of LEA expenditure can be fully assessed.



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# Basic Skills in the Transition from School to Work

The following fact sheets describe Government policies and initiatives which are designed to help young people to improve their basic skills as they prepare to move into employment.

Ideally, no young person should leave school without having achieved a good standard of literacy and numeracy. The programme of measures in place for children up to the age of 16 should help ensure this. But there are some young people who need extra help to equip themselves with the skills needed to get jobs.

Help is available for these young people either through Further Education (FE) or TEC-supported training. The Careers Service and the youth service also play an important role in providing guidance and support to young people.

Youth Training is the main Government initiative for school-leavers, underpinned by the Youth Training Guarantee. It provides initial vocational training to at least NVQ level 2 but with extra help available for young people who are not able to achieve that level. In particular, Youth Training includes Foundation level Wordpower and Numberpower training (equivalent to the new Entry level) to address basic literacy and numeracy needs.

The Relaunch Strategy, which was announced in the 1996 White Paper, *Learning to Compete*, will give further impetus to ensuring that no young people enter the world of work ill-equipped with the basics to compete effectively for jobs. It is expected that some of the successful partnership projects which will be launched as a result of the current bidding exercise will focus on young people seeking to improve their basic skills for employment.

To give targets for learners, teachers and trainers to strive for, a clear framework of qualifications is in place which give credit for basic skills. These qualifications give progressive steps of achievement, both in terms of levels of ability and in terms of application of skills, particularly in the world of work.



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# Further Education

## Key Facts

In 1995/96, the Further Education (FE) sector helped over 160,000 students, many of them young people, on basic skills courses.

The Government welcomes the continuing work of the Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC) Committee on Widening Participation in Further Education, under the chairmanship of Helena Kennedy QC, and looks forward to its full report to the Council in June 1997. Renewed efforts by the FE sector, working with its key partners to widen participation, will help the education and training system to identify and help more effectively young people and adults with basic skills problems.

The Government welcomes the Committee's emerging view that the 14-19 White Paper, *Learning to Compete*, published in December 1996, fulfils many of the Committee's objectives for widening participation among young people, notably through its Relaunch proposals. It looks forward to the development, within available resources, of the Committee's complementary recommendations for adults, published for consultation earlier this year.

The Committee proposes the piloting of local partnerships to widen participation among adults, and increased financial rewards for colleges which create attractive and coherent learning programmes for those previously under-represented in FE. Targeted basic skills provision will often be central to such programmes.

The Government has also welcomed the recent report from the Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities Committee, under Professor John Tomlinson, and now looks to the FEFC to take forward action, within available resources.

## Key Statistics

**Participation in basic education in the FE sector – academic year 1995/96**

| % increase in participation (over 1994/95) | No. of students participating | % of students studying part-time (approx.) | % of students aged 18+ (approx.) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 14% | 164,000 | 80% | 60% |

**% of 16-19 year olds who require basic skills support**

A recent survey suggested that more than 40% of 16-19 year old students in FE needed literacy support to achieve an NVQ level 2 or equivalent qualification.



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# Qualifications

## Key Facts

It is important to have qualifications which give credit for basic skills so as to give targets for learners, teachers and trainers to strive for. These need to present progressive steps of achievement, both in terms of levels of ability and in terms of application of skills, particularly in the world of work.

Basic skills are reflected and developed in qualifications in a variety of ways:

## GCSEs

The new generation of GCSEs introduced in September 1996 is fully aligned with the revised National Curriculum at Key Stage 4, which gives increased emphasis to basic skills.

All GCSEs which use English language have marks awarded for spelling, punctuation and grammar.

New developments which will further increase the focus on basic skills are:

- a separately reported grade for spoken English on GCSE certificates;
- mathematics examination papers to be taken without calculators;
- a separate English Language GCSE available from 1998;
- strengthening the way in which grading of English GCSE reflects accuracy in the use of English.

In 1996, 85% of 15 year olds achieved GCSEs in both English and mathematics, compared with less than 80% in 1991. Over 50% achieved English at grade C or above, and 42% achieved mathematics at this level.

## Key Skills in Education and Training

Key skills are needed in a wide range of employment settings, and are specifically designed to reflect the application of skills in a realistic work environment. The key skills include Communication and Application of Number, building on National Curriculum requirements for English and mathematics.

These key skills are a central feature of GNVQs, which over 250,000 students are working towards, and of Modern Apprenticeships.

Plans include:

- strengthening assessment of key skills in GNVQs;
- making Part One GNVQs available to all secondary schools;
- incorporating key skills in the new National Traineeships;
- making key skills qualifications available to those taking GCE A/AS examinations.

## Entry Level Qualifications

Since September 1996 schools have been able to provide a range of qualifications in literacy and numeracy, as well as Information Technology (IT), which are suitable for young people who are not ready to take GCSEs at 16.

These qualifications provide positive national recognition of achievements in these important skill areas. They are approved and monitored by the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA). They mark achievement and aim to motivate young people to progress towards higher qualifications.

Building on these developments, a range of Entry level qualifications will be available from September 1998 in line with Sir Ron Dearing's recommendation for an Entry level within the national qualifications framework.

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# Training for Young People

## Key Facts

Youth Training is the main Government initiative for school-leavers, underpinned by the Youth Training Guarantee. It is made available to young people under a variety of local names, linked to the Youth Credit. It provides initial vocational training to at least NVQ level 2 but with extra help available for young people who are not able to achieve that level.

In particular, Youth Training includes Foundation level Wordpower and Numberpower training (equivalent to the new Entry level) to address basic literacy and numeracy needs. Support for those who are identified as having such needs will continue to be available until more effective strategies are developed through Relaunch, the initiative to tackle low attainment and under-achievement announced in the December 1996 White Paper *Learning to Compete*. There will be a broader range of qualifications available as new Entry level awards, including those suitable for the workplace, are approved.

The Government will, however, seek in the short term to improve assessment and endorsement procedures by

- issuing guidance on good models of assessment;
- encouraging Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) and careers services to agree locally how to apply endorsement arrangements;
- placing more emphasis through funding arrangements on the induction and assessment stage.

## Costs

The expected spend on Work-Based Training for Young People in 1996-97 is £723m. The Government has allocated an extra £128m over the next three years for Work-Based Training for Young People. The actual costs of providing basic skills training cannot be identified separately.

## Key Statistics

Over half of leavers who had a literacy/numeracy need identified achieve a positive outcome (job, further education or training).



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# Relaunch Strategy

## Key Facts

The Relaunch Strategy announced in the White Paper, *Learning to Compete*, was the outcome to the Government's consultation on Sir Ron Dearing's recommendation for 'National Entry Provision' for young people lacking the necessary skills, motivation or career direction to progress satisfactorily.

Relaunch is targeted at young people unable or unlikely to make a successful transition from school to subsequent learning or employment. A prime focus will be disaffected people or those in danger of dropping out. This may include young people with literacy and numeracy difficulties.

The development of the new Entry level awards will contribute to Relaunch for those who have not achieved at GCSE Grade G, GNVQ Foundation or NVQ level 1.

Relaunch will be based around local partnerships which develop a strategic, coordinated approach. On 19 February, the Government is inviting bids from local consortia for funding partnership projects. All relevant local agencies including those with expertise in addressing basic skills needs should be involved. A key criterion of the bids will be the ability to measure the benefit of the proposed approach.

A national Advisory Group is being established to provide expert advice to the Government on the development of Relaunch.

## Costs

The Relaunch Strategy will concentrate all relevant funding, including mainstream education and training budgets which have been increased over future years, on tackling disaffection among young people. Partnership projects will contribute to the development of Relaunch and the Government is allocating £10m over the next three years to support them.

## Good Practice

DfEE is publishing two reports illustrating the range of initiatives established to tackle disaffection. These will inform the development of the Relaunch Strategy:

- *On Track: Motivating Young People to Stay in Learning* — report of a national conference organised by DfEE in November 1996 detailing 25 initiatives across a range of sectors. Copies are widely available.
- Catalogue of TEC (Training and Enterprise Council) initiatives. This is being put together on behalf of the Government by ECOTEC and will be available shortly.



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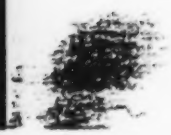
# Basic Skills for Work and Economic Development



The following fact sheets describe Government policies and initiatives to help adults with skills difficulties.

It is widely recognised that functional literacy and numeracy are increasingly important. Many adults without such skills find getting and keeping a job difficult. Employers recognise costly shortcomings in the basic skills of a significant proportion of their workforce. These increase the costs of higher level skill development in companies and can affect productivity and profits.

TECs, local authorities and others have recognised that concentrations of poor basic skills in particular local areas can constrain local economic development activity as well as contribute to localised social deprivation.

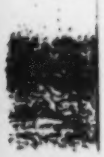
Employers, individuals themselves, as well as education and training providers and the Government all have a part to play in overcoming the shortcomings.

FE colleges and Local Education Authorities have a long tradition of providing individual-based literacy and numeracy learning. There is increasingly effective use of Information Technology in this and other provision for adults. For those who are unemployed, Employment Service assistance, provision for pre-vocational training under Training for Work and specific assistance in the new Project Work pilots help individuals acquire the skills necessary to get back to work.

For those in work, the recent and rapid growth of Employee Development Schemes, often supported by TECs, illustrate the importance of workplace support on basic skills.

There is a range of varied projects focused on helping people of all ages in local communities improve their basic skills. Family approaches are common. Government (Single Regeneration Budget), TEC and European funding is supporting many such local partnerships.

Taken together, the following fact sheets demonstrate the breadth and depth of Government-supported help available to adults.



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# Basic and Pre-Vocational Skills in Training for Work

## Key Facts

Special help is given to unemployed adults with severe literacy and numeracy problems in Training for Work (TfW). These are people assessed as having skills below the Basic Skills Agency's Entry standard. Many achieve Basic Skills Entry level qualifications as part of an individually tailored programme with occupational skills training and work experience with employers.

Their success rate in finding work is persistently below that of other people in TfW so two new initiatives have been launched.

Pre-Vocational Pilots operating in 57 Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) areas since April 1996 are highly popular with clients. The pilots offered practical help to develop the attributes that employers look for when recruiting. Particular attention has been paid to the mix of attitudes, motivation, recent work experience and basic skills that lie at the heart of many employers' recruitment standards. A quarter of people joining pilot programmes had severe basic skills difficulties. Overall, two-thirds of participants received some help with literacy and numeracy skills. From April 1997 pre-vocational training will be available in all parts of England and the programme is being increased from 10,000 to 30,000 places a year – with more in later years if the demand exists.

In addition, ten TECs will be invited to test the impact of offering higher level basic skills qualifications for people with severe literacy or numeracy problems entering TfW. In the pilot areas, TECs will have the flexibility to offer higher level qualifications for up to 18 months after people leave TfW. This provides incentives for continued support for basic skills and the basis for co-operative ventures with provision for people at work. The pilots will test whether higher basic skills qualifications increase the numbers of people leaving training to move into jobs and whether it helps people sustain learning habits acquired in TfW.

## Costs

The estimated cost of help for people with severe basic skills problems in TfW will rise from £43m in 1996-7 to £48m in 1997-8.

## Key Statistics

Around 17,000 people with severe literacy and numeracy problems are expected to join Training for Work in 1996-7 – 2,500 of them entering Pre-Vocational Pilots. Of these just under 8,000 will obtain qualifications and over 4,000 will obtain work within three months of leaving the programme.



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# Higher Level Basic Skills Qualifications in Training for Work

## Key Facts

This initiative will give one Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) in each region greater flexibility to offer higher level basic skills qualifications to people who enter Training for Work (TfW) assessed as having severe basic skills problems. Currently TECs are only paid for Entry level basic skills qualifications, but in the pilot areas they will be able to claim for higher level basic skills qualifications obtained within 18 months of leaving TfW.

Under the new arrangements, TECs in the pilot areas can adopt innovative approaches to help people with severe basic skills problems return to work in greater numbers than at present and sustain learning habits developed on TfW. Potential benefits include:

- allowing those who develop basic skills beyond Entry level to compete for a wider range of jobs;
- helping people who have progressed to Entry level to consolidate their learning habits and become independent learners;
- enabling people to adapt more readily to changes in the workplace and participate fully in company and community education and training initiatives.

Each TEC will decide how best to use the new flexibility though they will be invited to a national workshop with basic skills training experts in spring 1997. They will be encouraged to involve business people in the initiative, work closely with others offering help in basic skills, and focus on maintaining learners' motivation as they move out of TfW.

Pilot designs will take account of the particular needs of unemployed adults in the area; the types of job likely to be available; recruitment standards set by employers; and other local basic skills provision. Examples of possible approaches include:

- offering higher level basic skills qualifications alongside occupational qualifications within existing TfW programmes;
- devising extra basic skills help for former TfW trainees within programmes offered by employers;
- providing incentives for former TfW trainees who are receiving continuing basic skills training from adult and Further Education providers;
- supporting basic skills 'after care' facilities offered by TfW suppliers;
- funding part time basic skills provision for former TfW trainees who have yet to find a job.

## Costs

Around £500,000 will be made available over the next two years. This will meet the costs of additional output points for about 100 people in each TEC area involved in the pilots, plus the costs of the design workshop and evaluation.



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# Project Work

## Key Facts

Project Work aims to help people who have been out of work for two or more years to find jobs. It offers intensive help in finding a job followed by a period of work experience if participants remain unemployed.

Pilots have been running in Hull and Medway and Maidstone since April 1996. Encouraging results have led to an extension of the programme from February 1997 to 28 new locations across the country covering up to 100,000 people. New approaches will also be tested to tackle a range of issues identified in the first pilots.

Many people unemployed for a very long time have problems with basic skills. For such people extra help will increase their prospects of returning to work. In the expanded pilots:

- in all locations emphasis will be placed on identifying people who need help with basic skills. All Project Work advisers will be trained to identify basic skills needs and to refer people to the most appropriate provision;
- in five of the new areas up to 10,000 people will have access to extra and intensive help with literacy and numeracy. In these areas:
  - the Employment Service will buy in special diagnostic provision to identify basic skills needs when a person first enters the pilot;
  - during the second phase special training in literacy and numeracy will be provided substituting, where appropriate, for some of the required 21 hours attendance on work experience;
  - the Employment Service, with providers, will consider producing a report on participants when they leave Project Work, summarising their current skills levels and pointing the way for future action;
  - information will be gathered locally about basic skills needs and gaps in provision. Local agencies will be encouraged to work together to fill the gaps.

## Costs

£100m has been made available to extend Project Work pilots. £5.8m is reserved specifically for the five areas providing intensive help.

## Key Statistics

**6,617 people entered the current two pilots between April and December 1996.**

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# Basic Skills and Employee Development Schemes

## Key Facts

Employee Development Schemes provide learning opportunities for employees with support from the employer.

In July 1993 there were an estimated 50 Employee Development Schemes, mainly in large firms such as Ford. By the end of 1996, DfEE estimated that there were some 700 firms of all sizes operating schemes.

The activities are wider than job-related training which employers are expected to continue providing through their normal training arrangements. Often, employees are given an entitlement in the form of an annual allowance. Participation is voluntary.

Delivery arrangements vary and are usually centred around the needs of individual learners.

Learning centres providing on-site learning can feature, as does open learning and traditional college classroom methods. Activities normally take place in employees' own time.

DfEE is funding a group of five projects to see how basic skills can be better integrated within Employee Development Schemes.

Its particular interest is in the ability of such schemes to attract those at the bottom end of the skills ladder and other traditional 'non-learners'.

In the last Budget, the Chancellor announced his intention to give employees statutory exemption from tax on training funded by employers. This means that employees will no longer be taxed when they participate in Employee Development Schemes.

## Costs

DfEE is providing £124,000 in funding support for the five projects.

## Examples of Good Practice

DfEE is supporting the following projects:

- *Peugeot Motor Company* has recruited a basic/key skills specialist to undertake design and implementation of basic and key skills modules within their Assisted Development Programme (ADP) Employee Development Scheme. This will be piloted in the Parts Department, to assess the impact on take-up of learning. Courses are planned to start in February 1997.
- *Glass Training Ltd*, the Industry Training Organisation working with *Gregg and Co.* is running a series of voluntary, "fun learning" workshops, based around the Total Quality Management (TQM) theme of customer service and encouraging employees to move on to further learning through a variety of means. Interest amongst employees has been considerable and there has so far been good progression to other learning activities.
- *Lancaster University* will be offering help to several firms with mature Employee Development Schemes to develop basic skills provision within their menu of activities. Links with local basic skills experts will be fostered, to enable delivery to take place. This is currently at an early stage.
- *The Adult College, Lancaster* is helping several local firms to set up new Employee Development Schemes in which basic skills is imaginatively positioned and promoted. The companies are currently being identified.
- *Essex TEC* is working with three local firms to develop basic skills provision within their Employee Development Schemes. This is at an early stage of development.

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Basic Skills
fact sheet

# Information and Learning Technologies as a Delivery Mechanism for Basic Skills

## Key Facts

The potential role of Information and Learning Technologies (ILT) in achieving basic skill levels has been recognised for some time. There is increasing evidence about the effects of ILT in encouraging access and improving motivation. Evidence suggests that ILT is an effective medium in Special Educational Needs including teaching dyslexic trainees/students and those with learning difficulties.

Information Technology (IT) is increasingly becoming widely available for learning purposes in schools, colleges, employers' premises and other establishments. CD-ROMs and other software packages are available which can support the learning of basic skills. The National Council for Educational Technology (NCET) has evaluated a number of them and, where possible, the DfEE has included them in their initiatives to provide computers and software, particularly to schools. Information Technology is a mandatory subject within the National Curriculum for the whole period of compulsory schooling. Teachers are asked to teach IT across the curriculum and therefore it can be used to support literacy and numeracy.

The Basic Skills Agency (BSA) has done much to provide advice and materials for basic skills tutors, particularly through its Open Learning Centres. Some of these materials involve the use of ILT which have been shown to be an effective delivery mechanism. However, good practice can only become more widespread and effective when:

- more courseware is available to exploit opportunities available through ILT;
- staff in education and training establishments are more skilled in the use of ILT;
- opportunities have improved to allow those who need it, access to ILT equipment.

## Examples of Good Practice

At the *College of North East London*, Information Technology has been used successfully with adults who experience difficulties with literacy and numeracy, for a number of years.

The most significant benefits of using IT within Adult Basic Education have been found to be:

- motivational – obtaining a good, printed copy of a piece of writing can make a great difference;
- promotion of the ability to proof read and edit written work;
- encouragement of the development of transferable technological skills which may be useful in progressing to further training or employment.

Additionally the use of spreadsheets and databases fosters both interest and confidence in those students wishing to develop their numerical skills.

*Park Lane College, Leeds* together with *On-demand Information plc* has developed an innovative, community-based education service using about £1m European funding as part of the initiatives connected with the European Year of Lifelong Learning. An interactive multimedia system called *Choices* delivers learning programmes in six community centres in Leeds. The programmes include basic numeracy and literacy as well as NVQs in several vocational areas. The system allows students to access course material, submit assignments, EMAIL tutors and annotate materials on screen during audio-conference sessions with their tutors.

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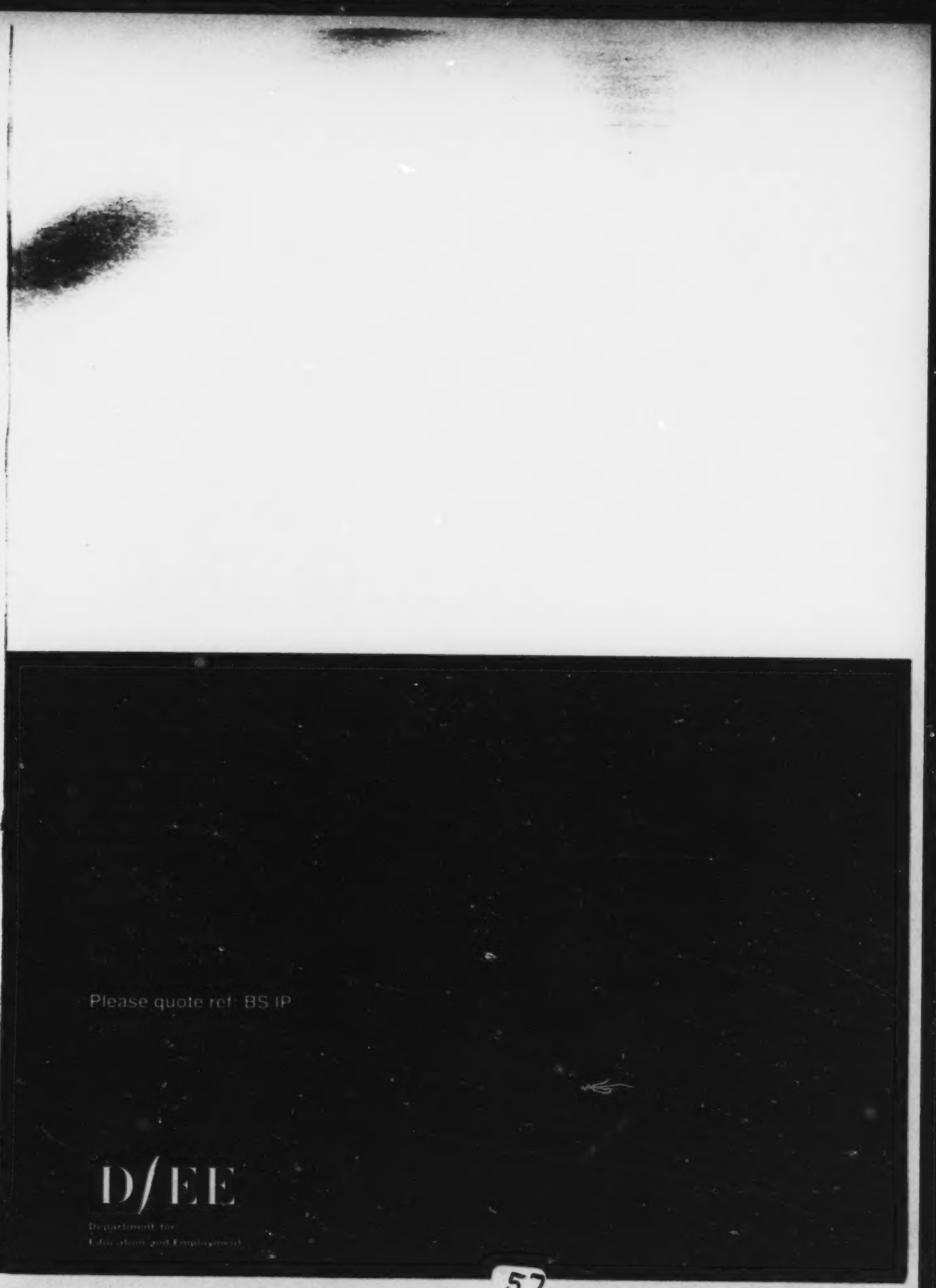
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